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Living with geese



Most people enjoy seeing Canada geese. However, the big birds often wear out their welcome when they become too numerous and when yards, beaches and docks become fouled with their feces. This guide explains why problems with geese arise and how homeowners can reduce these problems.

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Why are there so many geese?

Canada goose populations have dramatically increased in residential and lake home areas because:

- habitat is abundant;
- geese have a high reproductive potential and a long life span;
- mortality from hunting and other predation is low.

Geese live in a particular area that meets their needs for food, reproduction and security. Together these factors provide goose habitat. Geese are grazers that feed primarily on short grasses such as those found in parks, lawns and golf courses. They need feeding sites with open vistas and access to lakes and marshes to escape danger. Golf courses, parks and large lawns next to ponds, marshes and lakes often provide all of these ingredients. Docks, yards and beaches provide secure "loafing" sites for preening and sunning.

Canada geese are extremely prolific. Able to reproduce at 2 or 3

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years of age and living to over 10 years, a pair of adult geese raises an average of about 4 young per year. At normal reproduction and mortality, a pond or lake with 3 pairs of adult geese can multiply to nearly 50 birds within 5 years and to over 300 in just 10 years. Being social birds geese congregate in "flocks," except during the nesting season. Most birds in these flocks are related and return to the same nesting and feeding areas every year. Currently, about 25,000 geese spend the summer in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Without hunting seasons and efforts to trap and remove geese, the goose population would likely number 100,000 or more. Without these constraints on the population, the habitat in the seven-county metro area could support an estimated 250,000 geese.

Population management

The main drawback of avoidance methods is that they merely cause geese to move to another property. Increasing goose populations will eventually create a larger "demand" for habitat. This demand, often called "pressure," causes geese to become increasingly resistant to avoidance techniques.

Hunting is the most effective way to control goose populations. Special hunting seasons that target local geese have been established by the DNR. Early seasons are limited to field or upland hunting to prevent conflicts with other recreational uses of lakes. However, at the request of local government, individual lakes and wetlands may be opened.

Controlled hunting can be successful in populated areas. Local governments are encouraged to keep goose hunting open where possible. Citizens concerned with growing goose populations are encouraged to support local government efforts to limit restrictions on hunting where possible. The DNR will provide technical assistance in starting and managing hunts. For more information, contact your local [DNR Area Wildlife Office](#).

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